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Controller Westly Announces Arrest in Fraud Case

Sacramento – State Controller Steve Westly today said an investigation by his office led to an arrest in an identity theft case involving \$114,347 of Unclaimed Property funds.

“Identity theft is the fastest-growing white collar crime,” said Controller Westly. “My investigators are using every high-tech tool possible, and working strategically with other law enforcement agencies, to crack these cases, catch the suspects and prosecute them. People need to get the message that we won’t tolerate fraud.”

Federal and state law enforcement officers teamed up to arrest Gregory Mukoro, 53, of Inglewood, CA, who is facing charges of mail fraud. Mukoro, also known as Charles McBarango, is accused of submitting claims to the State Controller’s Unclaimed Property Bureau through the United States Mail to collect Unclaimed Property funds belonging to a man who died in 1967.

The arrest concludes a joint investigation by the California State Controller’s Office – Special Investigations Bureau, the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Sacramento Valley Hi-Tech Crimes/Identity Theft Task Force, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security – Investigation and Criminal Enforcement, and the Los Angeles Identity Theft Task Force.

The state acquires unclaimed property through California’s Unclaimed Property Program, which reunites Californians with money that is owed to them. State law requires “holders” such as corporations, business associations, financial institutions, and companies to annually report and deliver property to the Controller’s Office after there has been no customer contact for three years. Often the owner forgets that the account exists, or moves and does not leave a forwarding address or the forwarding order expires. In some cases, the owner dies and the heirs have no knowledge of the property.

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